

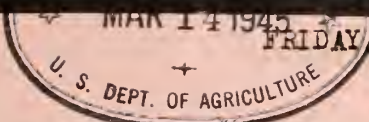
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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE



July 23, 1943

SUBJECT: "FIREPLACE MEALS IN WARTIME." Information from foresters of the
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The family with an outdoor fireplace in the backyard or in some shady place nearby is in luck these days when pleasure driving to picnic grounds and camping spots is out. With a backyard fireplace every supper can be an adventure in camp cookery. Different members of the family can take charge on different nights and try out new ideas.

Foresters of the U. S. Department of Agriculture are old hands at outdoor cooking. And today they offer some tips on fireplace meals.

Even the best of indoor cooks may not know all the secrets of campfire cooking, because cooking on a modern kitchen range and cooking over an open fire are very different. To begin with, the timing is different. You can't count on getting this food done in 20 minutes and that food done in 10 minutes as you can on the stove. And then you have to take care not to have too many different foods--too many to get over the fire and too many to serve comfortably on your picnic plates.

The management of the fire is something to know about. You can't turn an open fire on or off, up or down, as you can a gas or electric stove. You learn by experience how to build a campfire and when the fire is just right for cooking. A small fire is best to cook by. Wait until the fire burns down to red glowing embers before you put the food over. Flames will smoke up your pan and your face, and scorch broiled food.

For the most simple meals outdoors you cook on a grill or grating made

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right in the fireplace, or concocted of metal rods or even a pair of green sticks laid across two stones. Your principal and sometimes your only cooking utensil is a frying pan. Usually, though, you want a saucepan, too, for boiling water or heating liquids. Then, a wire broiler is handy for broiling meat, fish or chicken, or making toast. Also you will need a long-handled, sharp-pronged fork, and a spatula or pancake turner.

Now about the menu. In these wartime days you can't be sure of getting the favorite meats for cooking over a campfire--steaks or chops, hamburger cakes to eat in rolls, or bacon to cook crisp on pointed sticks. Instead of these meats you may have to think up other appetizing dishes that cook well over an open fire. Usually, you can find "weinies" at the butcher shop. And very often you can find lamb shoulder which you can cut up in small pieces and "string" on sharp sticks with slices of onion and bits of fat in between. These "strings" of lamb pieces, onion slices, and bits of fat you broil over the fire in just a few minutes. They're called "kebabs." Liver is another meat that cooks nicely over the campfire. Tender lamb kidneys are also good choices, and they are low in points.

Of course, on a real camping trip a good woodsman doesn't have to bother about points. He has his own fish or game to cook. You may have to buy your fish at the store, but, even so, you can cook it over your outdoor fire just as the woodsman does, and it will be delicious. And instead of the wild game birds the woodsman often has, you can have chicken cooked over the open fire.

Or you can have eggs ... eggs scrambled in the frying pan ... or an outdoor omelet ... or a combination dish of eggs, tomatoes, corn, chopped onion, and perhaps a little grated cheese.

Main dishes that take long cooking you can prepare indoors on the kitchen stove, and then just carry out and reheat over the picnic fire. You can do this

with baked beans...macaroni and cheese...spaghetti with tomatoes and cheese sauce.. and Spanish rice. Boil the macaroni, or spaghetti, or rice indoors...then add the tomatoes and cheese and seasonings when you heat it over the fire.

As for the vegetables to go along with the meat, fish, chicken, or eggs, you can have potatoes boiled in a kettle over the fire or baked in the hot ashes. Or you can have sweet corn boiled or roasted in the ashes. Or have a bowl of green salad mixed with French dressing just before serving the picnic meal. Panned vegetables are good, too..tender young squash cooked in a little fat and its own steam, in the camp frying pan, or chopped cabbage. You can also fry slices of tomato in a frying pan over the open fire--or fry slices of eggplant.

Here's what the foresters say about cooking fish over the campfire. Small fish you clean...dust with flour...season with salt and pepper...then fry in hot fat in the frying pan...bacon fat if possible because of its good flavor. Let your fire burn down to a bed of bright coals before you put on the frying pan. Then when the fat in the pan is hot, lay in the floured fish. Brown the fish on one side thoroughly before you turn it. Cover the skillet while the fish cooks.

A larger fish you can split and broil flat in your wire broiler. Shake on salt and pepper and broil over the red coals. Fish doesn't take long to cook. Fish flesh is tender and is usually done when it is hot all through and browned on the outside.

A young tender chicken you can cook in the same way by splitting it in two... seasoning with salt and pepper...then broiling over the coals. Sometimes the chicken is more delicious if you rub it over with fat before you put it over the fire.

One last note: Here's how to roast ears of corn. Fold back the green husks and remove the silk. Wrap again in husks and then in damp paper. Lay directly in the hot embers and steam.

As for dessert, fresh fruit that you can eat out of hand--peaches, plums, apples, whatever is in season--is fine for topping off an outdoor meal. But if you want a real old-time woodsman's dessert, you'll have flapjacks and sirup. For a cool night they make a hot and hearty ending for the meal.

